

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SENTION 1 OF 2 PRAGUE 228

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CZ

SUBJECT: SIGNS OF HARD POLITICKING WITHIN COMMUNIST PARTY RANKS

REF: A) PRAGUE 2936 (1975); B) PRAGUE 2974 (1974)

1. SUMMARY: THERE ARE INCREASING SIGNS OF UNUSUAL DEBATE IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK AND SLOVAK COMMUNIST PARTIES. THERE SEEMS TO BE INTRA-PARTY AND INTER-PARTY FRICTION, LACED WITH CZECH-SLOVAK RIVALRY, ABOUT THE PRESCRIPTIONS TO CURE THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC ILLS SET FORTH BY A NOVEMBER CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK CP (KSC). A MAJOR ISSUE OF CONTENTION IS APPARENTLY CENTRALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY, IN PARTICULAR CENTRALIZED PLANNING. SOME CLUES ABOUT THE CURRENT DEBATE ARE PROVIDED BY THE RECENT SLOVAK PARTY PLENUM WHICH FOLLOWED HARD ON THE HEELS OF THE FIRST SLOVAK PLENUM. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PUBLIC RESOLUTIONS FROM THE CZECHOSLOVAK CP

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CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM OF NOVEMBER AND THE TWO

SLOVAK PARTY PLENUMS WHICH FOLLOWED DID NOT REVEAL JUST HOW FORMIDABLE INNER-PARTY TENSIONS ARE. THERE, THE APPARENT STRESS WAS ON ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND HOW PARTY AND GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO GET BUSY TURNING AROUND A SERIOUSLY AILING CZECHOSLOVAK ECONOMY, ALMOST ENTIRELY BY MOTIVATING WORKERS TO MORE EFFICIENT PRODUCTION AND USE OF RESOURCES -- IN EFFECT, BY EXHORTATION ALONE. IN DECEMBER, PARTY-, GOVERNMENT-, AND INDUSTRY-WIDE MEETINGS WERE HELD SPECIFICALLY TO GET THE NOVEMBER KSC CC PLENUM MESSAGE OUT. THE PEOPLE'S PARTY AND THE SLOVAK CP MET TO ENDORSE THE NOVEMBER SITTING. THE QCESS BEGAN BURYING THE MORE TRADITIONAL "TASKS OF TM # SUKOUQ#XIV UGC CONGRESS" UNDER A BARRAGE OF EXHORTATIONS TO MEET THE MORE TIMELY DEMANDS OF THE NOVEMBER PLENUM: EFFICIENCY, SAVINGS IN RESOURCES, INCREASED PRODUCTION. IF JAWBONING INDEED HAD BEEN THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS, CZECHOSLOVAKIA WAS WELL ALONG THE ROAD TO ECONOMIC MIRACLES BY THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR.

3. BUT INSTEAD, THE NEW YEAR BROUGHT SIGNS OF UNEXPECTED TROUBLE, ITS ROOT CAUSE IN THE ECONOMIC WOES, BUT ITS EFFECT ON PARTY UNITY. THE SAME GROUPS WHICH MET COUNTRY-WIDE IN DECEMBER BEGAN MEETING AGAIN (THEY CONTINUE EVEN NOW), CAPPED BY THE JANUARY 15-16 SLOVAK CP REPLAY OF ITS DECEMBER PLENUM. CERTAINLY THE DECEMBER SLOVAK MEETING WAS THE PREDICTABLE POLITICAL PHENOMENON NEEDED TO ENDORSE THE NOVEMBER KSC CC PLENUM: ON THE SURFACE, THE "REPEAT" PLENUM'S FINAL COMMUNIQUE SHOWS THAT THE JANUARY KSS SITTING DID THE SAME THING. WHY TWO MEETINGS?

4. THE ANSWER MAY LIE IN THE UNEXPECTEDLY STRONG RESISTANCE FROM LOWER ECHELONS TO THE NOVEMBER DECISIONS, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS ECONOMIC CENTRALIZATION. SLOVAK COMMUNISTS AT PARTY AND INDUSTRIAL MIDDLE LEVEL POSITIONS HAVE BEEN MEETING SINCE THE FIRST SLOVAK CC PLENUM: THEIR BASIC PURPOSE MAY HAVE BEEN TO TELL THE LEADERSHIP THAT THE NOVEMBER KSC CC JAWBONING SOLUTIONS WERE NON-STARTERS. THUS WHEN THE SLOVAK PLENUM MET AGAIN, NOT ONLY LENART BUT STROUGAL HAD TO IMPLORE THE FAITHFUL TO GET CONFIDENTIAL

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ON WITH THE KSC NOVEMBER PROGRAM. ACTUALLY, IT WAS MORE THAN IMPLOING: THE COMMUNIQUE DOES NOT MINCE WORDS IN TELLING SLOVAK COMMUNISTS TO GET ON WITH THINGS IMMEDIATELY.

5. BECAUSE OF POTENTIALLY ADVERSE POLITICAL IMPACT, THE KSC CC ITSELF WOULD NOT LIKE TO EMULATE THE KSS CC AND RECONVENE TO REAFFIRM ITS NOVEMBER DECISIONS

AND BECUASE THERE IS NO CZECH PARTY IT WILL BE MORE
DIFFICUPX FORINSTITUTIONAL PARTY PROTESTS TO FILTER UP AND
SPILL OUT IN BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA. BUT SIGNS OF UNREST AMONG
THE CZECHS HAVE APPEARED AS WELL, AND MORE AND MORE
MEETINGS HELD. LIKE THE LSOVAK HAPPENINGS, THEY TOO MAY
INDICATE THAT THE NOVEMBER KSC LINE OF TALKING THE PARTY
AND COUNTRY OUT OF THEIR ECONOMIC WORRIES IS BEING RECEIVED
JUST AS NEGATIVELY BY THE CZECHS. ON JANUARY 24, RUDE
PRAVO PRINTED A LONG ESSAY BY A SLOVAK DISTRICT CP
SECRETARY, RUDOLF NITIK, WHO CALLED FOR A RECONCILIATION
BETWEEN THE DEMANDS OF THE NOVEMBER KSC SOLUTIONS AND THE
PRAGMATIC NECESSITY FOR A RELAXATION OF CENTRALIZED
ECONOMIC PLANNING. HE WROTE THAT MANAGEMENT HAD TO
MESH REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS WITH BRANCH --I.E. LOWER-
LEVEL--CONSIDERATIONS, THAT LITTLE HAD BEEN DONE OVERALL
(AND NOTHING AT ALL FOR 1975) TO IMPLEMENT GOVERNMENT
RESOLUTIONS SUGGESTING REGIONAL PLANNING AND THAT "IT
WOULD BE A MISTAKE IF REGIONAL PLANNING WAS NOT INCORPORATED
IN THE SIXTH FIVE YEAR PLAN." WITHOUT ACTION ON THESE
FRONTS, NETIK CONCLUDED, THE NOVEMBER KSC LINE, THOUGH
WELL CONCEIVED, WOULD NOT BE MET AND SHORTFALLS (ESPECIALLY
IN EXPORTS) WOULD CONTINUE.

6. RUDE PRAVO HAS BALANCED THE PICTURE SINCE WITH A FRONT
PAGE EDITORIAL JANUARY 29 (PERHAPS AS AUTHORITATIVE A
PEICE FOR THE KSC AS THE SLOVAK JANUARY PLENUM LINE WAS
FOR THE SLOVAKS) REMINDING ALL PARTY MEMBERS THAT THE
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REVIEW SESSIONS AT EVERY PARTY LEVEL
ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN, BUT THAT THIS YEAR EMPHASIS WILL BE
ON IMPLEMENTING THE NOVEMBER CC PLENUM LINE. RP
SAID THESE SESSIONS WERE TO TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT
"SHORTCOMINGS BLOCKING OUR EFFORT AND SET FORTH TASKS...
TO MEET THEM." NETIK MAY BE LOSING HIS BID.
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NOTE BY OC/T: # GARBLED TEXT PARA 2 AS RECEIVED

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRAGUE 0228

7. WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE? CERTAINLY THE ECONOMY IS, PRECISELY THE POINT CRITICS FEEL HUSAK AND THE KSC PRESIDUM MAY HAVE MISSED TILL NOW. WHETHER THESE CRITICS ARE RIGHT OR WRONG, THEY HAVE UNEXPECTEDLY FORCED THE KSC LEADERSHIP TO DIVERT MUCH OF ITS ENERGY OVER THE LAST TWO MONTHS MERELY TO SECURE THE NOVEMBER LINE-- WITH ITS HOPED FOR BENEFITS FOR THE ECONOMY--AS PARTY -WIDE POLICY. MOREOVER, THE 1976-1980 PLAN STANDS TO SUFFER. ON THE ONE HAND, IT WILL BE DELAYED IF THE NOVEMBER LINE IS INCORPORATED AND IS THEN SHOWN FAULTY BY A POOR ECONOMIC SHOWING OVER THE COURSE OF THIS YEAR. ON THE OTHER, IT WILL BE DELAYED IF PARTY PLANNERS ARE SUCCESSFULLY FORCED BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARDS NOW TO INCORPORATE SOME OF THE CRITICISMS CURRENTLY BEING VOICED. IF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP REMAINS INTRANSIGENT, MORE OF THE SAME-- MALAISE, DISSATISFACTION, RISING WORLD PRICES-- AND PERHAPS EVEN MALICE MAY OVERTAKE THE ECONOMY BY THE END OF 1975.

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8. THE TIMING AND OUTLINE OF THE XVTH PARTY CONGRESS MAY ALSO BE AT STAKE. AT THE SECOND KSS CC PLENUM, STROUGAL POINTEDLY LET IT BE KNOWN THAT FAILURE TO GET ON WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NOVEMBER PLENUM LINE WAS AFFECTING PLANNING FOR THE NEXT CONGRESS. SINCE ONE OF THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF THE XVTH CONGRESS WILL BE TO ENDORSE THE

SIXTH FIVE YEAR PLAN, ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PARTY WHO TODAY MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO FORESTALL A DISASTROUS INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CENTRAL PLANNING FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS--WHICH THEY SEE INHERENT IN THE NOVEMBER KSC LINE AND WE SEE AS THEIR FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE-- WOULD OBVIOUSLY WISH TO DELAY THE CONGRESS UNTIL EXHAUSTING EVERY POSSIBILITY FOR MAKING THEIR POINTS.

9. A MORE INSIDIOUS PROBLEM MAY BE AMPLIFYING THESE WOES: RIVALRY BETWEEN CZECHS AND SLOVAKS. PART OF THE NOVEMBER KSC LINE, AS REPORTED IN THE DECEMBER 11 RUDE PRAVO, WAS THE NEED FOR CZECHS AND SLOVAKS TO GET ALONG BETTER IN PARTY WORK. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER HINTS RECENTLY ABOUT CZECH-SLOVAK FRICTION.

10. IF THE CRITICS AMIDST PARTY RANKS SUCCEED IN FORCING A RETHINK OF THE NOVEMBER KSC CC DECISIONS (THEY OBVIOUSLY DID NOT AT THE JANUARY SLOVAK CC PLENUM), HUSAK AND THE KSC PRESIDUM MAY HAVE TO TURN IN A NEW DIRECTION--DECENTRALIZATION-- IN THE CURRENT SIXTH FIVE YEAR PLANNING. POOR ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE THIS YEAR, BASED ON THE NOVEMBER GUIDELINES, COULD ALSO PUSH THEM IN THIS DIRECTION. BUT WE TAKE THE JANUARY SLOVAK CC PLENUM AS A SIGN THAT HUSAK IS STILL COMMITTED TO SOVIET-STYLE CENTRAL PLANNING AND THAT HE HAS THE POWER TO SEE IT IMPOSED UPON THE PARTY.
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